

again by giving just as much publicity to the facts as it did to the harmful story. Your sense of fair play and justice all around will some day show you that you are not giving us a fair deal under the circumstances, and when you get this point of view you'll pay the bill, because you are built that way."

Slowly he turned to his desk and silently wrote a check, which he handed to me, saying, "Old man, I don't believe there is another man in the world who could have got that check from me,—and maybe I'll stop payment on it yet,—but you've been mighty decent about it, and you are right. Here's your money."

I had already given the money up, and was astonished when he gave me the check, which was for the full amount; but I put out my hand and said, "Shake, Bill! You are one of the whitest, squarest men I've ever met, and I want to be your friend as long as we live. If I can ever do you any service, I want you to call on me, and I want you to list me as one of your real friends who will fight for you."

He smiled, shook hands and said, "Call it a bet! Let's go eat."

When I went back to the office I threw the check on the Old Man's desk without a word, and then watched him. He read the check, and then looked up at me, his friendly eyes twinkling with humor as he said:

"Is your middle name Li Hung Chang? How'd you do it?"

"There are some things I don't tell everybody," I replied, and the matter dropped until some weeks later, when I went to dinner with the Old Man and told him the whole story.

Later he met the other man in Pittsburgh, and they were fast friends until the Old Man died two years ago.

Winner of \$15 Prize

## A STRANGE ROOMMATE

By P. J. McFarland of Edina, Mo.

IT was forty years ago that I left Philadelphia by stage to visit my mother forty miles away. A few miles before we reached a roadhouse where we were to spend the night we picked up an elderly man carrying a carpetbag. He was an exceedingly interesting old fellow, and helped relieve the monotony of the journey by stories of his experiences in the East, and praises of his beautiful wife and daughter, whose miniatures he promised to show us; though at times he was abstracted and morose, as if something was preying on his mind.

When we reached the inn it happened to be crowded, and the old man and I had to occupy the same room. When I remarked that I should not object the other astonished me by remarking, "Remember, Sir, that the proposal came from you, and if Fate should—" But on seeing my wonderment he passed it off by saying that he was preoccupied with important private matters. After talking for awhile we retired, he taking the main bed, and I sleeping on a couch in an alcove at one side.

I had apparently barely got to sleep when I was troubled by a bad dream. It seemed as if somebody was walking about the room and came over and laid his hand on me; but when I waked up everything was quiet, and the old man was snoring quietly. But again, and this time in reality, I heard stealthy footsteps, and plainly the words, "The will of Fate!" I jumped up and lit the candle; but the old man seemed still asleep. I left the candle burning, however, and after awhile managed to get to sleep again.

When I finally awoke it was daylight, and the old man, already dressed, was standing by the bureau with his back to me.

"It's the will of Fate!" he was saying to himself. "There's no resisting it! I call you on all to witness!" extending his hand as if talking to a company. "I am only an unthinking agent in this matter. His blood be on Fate's head, not mine!"

He turned and walked toward me, a pointed pistol in his hand, his eyes glowing like burning coals. "Come, Sir, prepare for death! Fate, whom I serve, commands me to slay you at the rising of the sun!"

Terrified by the maniac, for I was now convinced that he was one, I trembled in dread; for if I made the slightest move I knew he would fire. Then like a flash came the thought that the landlord would be at the door in a few minutes to call me, and that I must gain time.

"Are you praying?" said the madman.

"I'm thinking," I replied, "that this is very hard treatment to offer a man who has done nothing worse to you than let you share his room."

"Can't help it," he said. "Must obey orders."

"Do you know," I went on, "that you have deceived me? Here you let me believe that you were an ordinary business man, so as to fool me into letting you occupy my room, never telling me that you were an agent of Fate!"

He looked troubled. "Deceived is a strong word, Sir," he said.

"I can call it nothing else," I returned. "And when a man deceives me about one thing I am apt to distrust

any other statement he makes. I doubt now that you ever were in the East; I doubt that you were ever married, or ever had a daughter. I don't believe you have her miniature in your carpetbag, as you said."

"I have! I swear I have it here in my carpetbag!" he insisted, in his perturbation letting the revolver fall to his side.

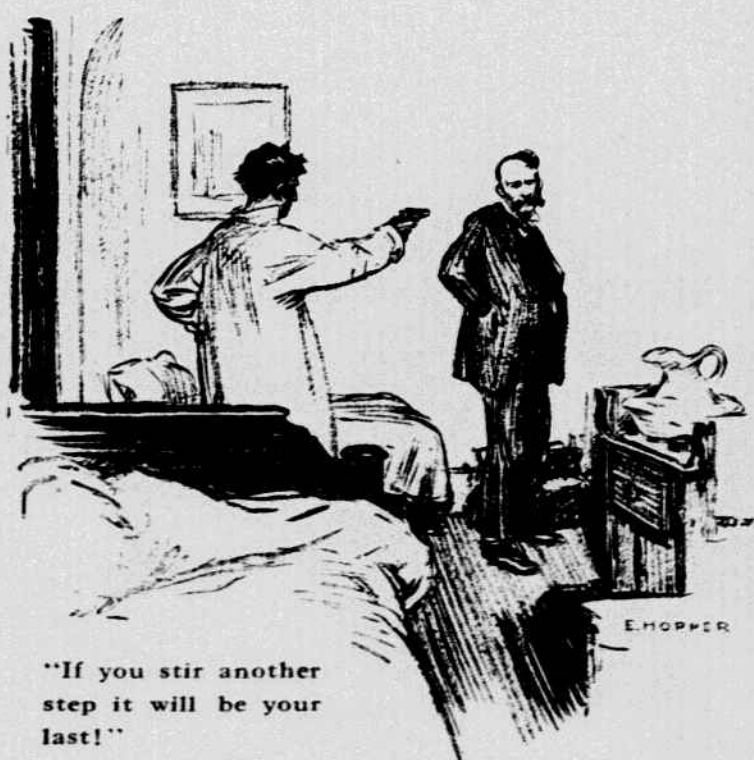
"Well, I'll believe you when I receive the picture, and not before," I declared.

He laid the pistol down on my bed and strode across the room.

Just then I heard the landlord's step, and sprang to my feet, pointed the revolver at the lunatic, and shouted, "If you stir another step, it will be your last!" Then I threw open the door and admitted our host, who stood there in amazement.

The old man was as bland and self possessed as the day before, and denied my accusations in toto, calling attention to my excited appearance. "Just look at him, and contrast his manner with mine. You heard him outside just now, Landlord, threaten to shoot me. He has the pistol in his hand now. Is it likely that I would give it to him? The man is utterly insane, has been acting like a maniac ever since he awakened."

I was so nonplussed at this that I waved the pistol excitedly as I endeavored to show the old man's perfidy. The latter shouted, "Help! Murder!" And the land-



"If you stir another step it will be your last!"

lord echoed his shouts, crying, "There's a maniac upstairs!" as he grabbed the old man by the arm and dragged him out into the hall.

I don't know how it would have turned out if help had not come just then from an unexpected quarter. Two burly men, who announced themselves as keepers from an insane asylum, rushed upstairs, and in an instant had the old man handcuffed. It appeared that the latter had been an actor, and was possessed of an incurable homicidal mania. He had escaped from the institution, and his pursuers had followed and arrived just at that opportune moment.

Winner of \$5 Prize

## THE WHOLE WORLD KIN

By E. W. B. Thompson of San José, Calif.

THE Mount Hamilton stage was on its way to Lick Observatory, loaded with passengers for the open night. They were all men, all strangers to one another, and from the four corners of the earth. The back seat was occupied by a naval officer and an Irish priest, the middle seat by a German astronomer and a Mexican coffee planter; while an actor sat in front beside a traveling man.

To lighten the tedium of the two hours still before them in the heat of an August sun, the actor proposed that each should relate the most interesting incident of his latest trip.

By the time they had come to the brickyard, where the great white dome of the observatory loomed directly above them, each passenger, with one exception, had told his story.

"And now, Sir," said the actor, turning to the man beside him, "it's up to you."

"Up to me!" repeated the traveling man. "Why, bless me! so it is. Well, the story I'm going to tell isn't exactly in my line; but it's the best thing I've seen lately. It was up at Portland last week at a Baptist convention. I took one afternoon off to drop into that convention to see if I could find my old pastor, Elder Myers, and some of my home folks."

"Well, home missions were on the docket when I entered, and the secretary was telling a story. He said one of their clergy was playing to hard luck. To try and save his daughter, who was a consumptive, he had given up his church in Astoria, and moved to Arizona. What with farming, putting up a house with his own

hands weekdays and preaching to Indians and homesteaders without pay Sundays, the little cash he had on hand had melted away, except a nestegg in an Astoria bank. And now this bank had failed, and the family was left without funds.

"By this time we were all expecting an appeal for help. Instead of that, the secretary took out of his pocket a letter he had just got from this minister's wife and read it. She didn't say a word about help. She only told how sorry she was they couldn't keep up their annual subscription to home missions. They hadn't any money to give this year; but she had a ring a Chinese Sunday school pupil of hers in Astoria had given her for teaching him English. She said the ring wasn't worth much of anything,—only curious because it was Chinese,—but she would inclose it in the letter, hoping someone might give a dollar for it, to be contributed to home missions. And the secretary held up the ring.

"You ought to have seen the convention then! In less than a jiffy silver dollars were raining on that platform. When the storm was over two hundred and fifty-three dollars were gathered up. And what do you suppose that convention did with 'em? Voted to contribute fifty dollars to home missions, and to return the ring with two hundred and three dollars to the minister's wife!"

For a moment no one spoke. Then, in a rich brogue, the priest said:

"Dear human nature! How often is it better than it seems, than worse!"

Winner of \$5 Prize

## A FEW BARS OF SOAP

By Thomas J. Kittinger of Dorchester, Mass.

AFTER a discouraging fortnight I reached a prominent mill town in my territory early one Monday afternoon. I made a few calls on some of the trade, and learned that Peter Campbell, owner of the most unpretentious store in town, did more soap business than all the other stores put together.

"He supplies practically all the mills in this place with soap," I was told; "but he's a quaint old codger, a Scotsman, who'd as soon waste a dollar as a word. His only objection to the Imperial's man, with whom he does all his soap business, is that he talks too much."

I found Campbell a man of seventy-odd years, and doing a nice little business with the sole aid of a chap of sixteen, who acted as driver, errand boy, and assistant salesman. I waited until Campbell had finished tying up a bundle for a customer, then slowly approached him. He took me in at a glance, from the top of my derby to the tip of my shoe, and the following conversation, if you would call it such, ensued:

CAMPBELL.—"Buy?"

MYSELF.—"No, sell."

"What?"

"Soap," handing him my card.

"Satisfied—Imperial."

"Beat 'em, deliveries prompt, terms right."

"Imperial'll do."

"Ship trial order, guaranteed satisfied, money back."

"See your stuff."

At his last words I opened my grip and showed him my attractive line without a word. He carefully handled every sample in the case, smelling of it, running it over his face, almost biting it, noting the price with an occasional shrug of his shoulders and another grunt. Then he abruptly left me and went into his office, a mere hole in the wall with a desk and chair in it. I nervously packed up my case, wondering if by chance he would give me a good order.

After a wait of ten minutes he returned with a paper in his hand. Giving my back a resounding whack, he handed me the paper and said:

"Order—rush—come again."

With a hasty handshake I was off, and when, at the corner of the street, out of sight, I finally opened my order I was staggered. It was some whopper, my first big one, and the beginning of my success as a soap salesman.

Winner of \$5 Prize

## WORKING UP AN OLD SOLDIER

By Thomas C. Clark of Chicago

I WAS traveling for a piano house in those days. During several weeks I had chosen to make the country roundabout the city of D— on a piano wagon. The best proposition I had struck that week was the daughter of a wealthy farmer. She had temperament, and also a strong desire to keep the instrument I had put into their home on trial. But she could not pull her father's pursestrings to the extent of the five hundred dollars needed.

I had used all the tricks of the piano salesman. I had pointed out the advantages my make had over others. I had demonstrated for the old man the mellow tone